

THE HONORABLE JAMES L. ROBERT

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

CITY OF SEATTLE,

Defendant.

No. 2:12-cv-01282-JLR

COMMUNITY SURVEY FOR  
FEBRUARY 2019

The Community Survey for February 2019, is dated March 7, 2019.



SEATTLE  
POLICE  
MONITOR

**Community Survey**  
February 2019



Our January 2019 survey of community attitudes about the Seattle Police Department (SPD) revealed good news, as well as continued community concerns regarding whether the SPD treats all races and ethnicities equally. Anzalone Liszt Grove conducted and analyzed the results.

Approval ratings for the overall performance continue to rise throughout the community, with an approval rating of 74%. This rating reflects a significant increase over the life of the Consent Decree, up from a 60% overall approval rating in 2012. The survey concluded that “approval is uniformly high across all racial groups.” In addition, approval among African Americans reached 72% (up from 62% last year).

Anzalone notes that “The [SPD] get good marks for serving and protecting. Three-quarters of residents agree that Seattle Police do a good job ‘keeping people safe’ (74% agree) and 7 in 10 agree they do a good job ‘serving [my] neighborhood’ (70% agree). Views are similarly positive across racial and geographic lines.”

On a less positive note, Anzalone remarks that “on every specific measure we asked about, African Americans were still less likely than whites to report a positive interaction with the police. The biggest discrepancies were on agreeing the police had a valid reason for stopping them (69% of whites / 47% of African Americans)”

Anzalone reports that “a plurality of Seattleites (47%) disagree with the notion that SPD treats “all races and ethnicities equally,” with over a fifth (22%) *strongly* disagreeing. A majority of African Americans disagree with the statement (54% disagree), with African American women particularly in disagreement (61% disagree).”

The monitoring team, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the SPD recognize that efforts to identify unwarranted disparities and address the causes of those disparities are not complete and that community relations must continue to be a top priority in the future. Self-assessment and community engagement must be a permanent part of how policing services will be delivered to all Seattle communities. The Court-approved Sustainment Plan includes SPD’s commitment to conduct two separate assessments of its compliance with the stops and detentions requirements of the Consent Decree, as well as two “disparity reviews”

that will provide more granular insight into measures of disparity within community/police contacts.



January 25, 2019

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Pia Nargundkar and Brian Stryker

Re: Seattle Police Community Survey Findings

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This research was commissioned by the federal monitoring team to assess community perceptions of the Seattle police, gauge the prevalence of community interactions with the police, and understand the nature of those interactions. This is the fourth survey of its kind commissioned by the monitoring team, and it follows a similar survey conducted in September 2016 that asked many of the same questions to a similar audience.

Of particular note, the monitoring team set out to measure how often Seattle residents say they are the victims of racial profiling, excessive force, and verbally abusive language. In this survey, we set out to measure any changes in attitudes on these issues from the research we conducted between 2013 and 2016. Rather than looking at this year's data in isolation, we looked at changes in perceptions of how often certain events happen, and how Seattleites perceive the way police treat people in various racial, socioeconomic, and demographic groups.

As we have done in two of the previous iterations of this poll, we conducted an oversample of Latinos—in English and Spanish—and an oversample of African Americans. This allowed us to analyze these communities not just as a monolithic bloc, but to look for differences in perceptions among these groups by key demographics and experiences (age, gender, interactions with police, etc.). We weighted the full survey results to be representative of Seattle's population.

### **Key Findings**

**The Seattle Police Department's overall ratings remain steady, with high approval across racial lines.** Nearly three-quarters of Seattle residents approve of the Seattle Police Department (74% approve / 21% disapprove), in line with the 72% who approved in 2016. Remarkably, approval is uniformly high across all racial groups, with approval among African Americans rising from 62% in 2016 to 72% this year. Voters rate SPD similarly to the Washington State Patrol (75% approve / 8% disapprove / 17% don't know), although the WSP is less known. While in line with approval ratings from 2016, voters' approval of SPD has improved remarkably from where it was six years ago (60% approval) and even from where it was in 2015 (64% approval).

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research conducted n=700 live cellphone and landline telephone interviews with adults 18 and older in Seattle, with an additional 100 interviews among Latinos and 100 interviews among African Americans. General-population respondents were selected at random, with interviews apportioned geographically, by police precinct, based on Census information. Care was taken to get a representative number of interviews via cellphone to insure a survey that was representative of the city's population by race, age, and income. Oversamples among Latinos and African Americans were conducted using listed sample with predictive modeling of race. The survey was then weighted to accurately reflect the distribution of the population by various demographic characteristics. The expected margin of sampling error is + 3.7% at the 95% confidence level for all adults and higher for subgroups.

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**Seattle Police get good marks for serving and protecting.** Three-quarters of residents agree that Seattle Police do a good job “keeping people safe” (74% agree) and 7 in 10 agree they do a good job “serving [my] neighborhood” (70% agree). Views are similarly positive across racial and geographic lines.

**People are reporting better interactions with SPD.** People who were stopped by SPD are slightly more likely to approve of the way that situation was handled (75% approve) than they were in 2016 (71%), and much more likely than they were in 2013 (65%). In particular, African Americans and Latinos approve of their interactions at a higher rate (from 44% approve in 2013 to 61% in 2016 to 68% in 2019). This also extends to specific factors about those interactions—for example people are less likely to say police threatened them during an interaction and more likely to say officers explained why they were stopped.

**The belief that SPD treats people of all races equally has declined since 2016.** Only 39% of people agree that the Seattle Police treat people of all races and ethnicities equally, down from 43% in 2016. Similarly, 57% of residents say that SPD engages in racial profiling often (up from 52% in 2016), and another 57% say the Department often treats people differently because of their race (up from 50% in 2016).

Specifically, few people think the Department treats African Americans (24%), Native Americans (29%) or Latinos (33%) the same as other members of the community. Views on whether specific minority groups are treated similarly have worsened for each minority group since 2016, with white voters in particular more likely to now say African Americans are not treated the same (61% of white voters, up from 56% in 2016).

**And a sizable portion of the public continues to believe SPD uses excessive force, abusive language, and racial slurs often.** Views on this have improved slightly since 2016 among residents overall. Currently, 42% of residents believe the Department uses excessive physical force often (on par with the 41% who believed so in 2016), 27% believe verbally abusive language is used often (down from 30%) and 20% believe racial slurs are used towards minorities often (down from 25%). In general 2016 appears to be the high point for views on SPD, so it is encouraging that we have seen further improvement on these specific fronts in 2019. In fact, the percent of residents who believe SPD uses verbally abusive language and racial slurs against minorities often has fallen six points each since 2013.

At the same time, views among communities of color are still middling. A majority (55%) of African American and Latino residents believe that SPD uses excessive physical force often, 4 in 10 believe the Department uses verbally abusive language, and a third (34%) believe racial slurs are often used towards minorities.

**As we’ve seen previously, people are far more likely to report hearing about a negative interaction with SPD than personally experiencing one.** Among residents who had a family, friend, or neighbor interact with the police, almost a third disapproved (32% disapprove;

compared to 21% who disapproved of their personal interaction). People of color were twice as likely to disapprove of the interaction someone in their network had than white people (47% disapprove vs. 24% disapprove).

Similarly, while just 4% of residents report being treated differently by Seattle Police due to their race or ethnicity in the past year, 21% of residents say they know someone who has. Less than 1% report being the victim of excessive force, yet 5% report knowing someone who was. And once again, these reported incidences are higher among people of color, especially African Americans.

### **Overall Views of Seattle Police**

Views on the Seattle Police Department steadily improved from 2013 to 2016, with ratings now in line with where they were in 2016. Nearly three-quarters of the city approves of the department (74% approve / 21% disapprove.) Thanks to improved views among African Americans this year, there are now little racial differences in overall views of the SPD.

<b>Race</b>	<b>% Approve (2019)</b>	<b>% Approve (2016)</b>
<b>White</b>	75	72
<b>African Americans</b>	72	62
<b>Latinos</b>	75	74
<b>Asian Americans</b>	72	72

While there are little differences in views between the races, among Latino residents, Spanish-dominant adults are more positive in their views (81% approve) than English-dominant residents (70% approve). Meanwhile, residents younger than 35 are less likely to approve of the Seattle Police Department than their older counterparts (68% approve vs. 77% approve), a trend that holds across racial lines. Similarly, those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender are less likely to approve of the Department than those who do not (61% approve vs. 75% approve).

Views of SPD are high across the city, though there are some regional differences. Approval is highest in the western part of the city (82% approve), where views have improved remarkably since 2016 (when 66% approved). Views remain high in the southwest region as well (79%), while slightly lower in the northern (72%), southern (70%) and eastern (70%) parts of the city. Like the western region, the eastern region also saw some improvement in views since 2016, when 62% approved of SPD.

Police Chief Carmen Best, who officially took over the role in August 2018, gets fairly high marks as well (58% approve / 10% disapprove / 33% don't know). That gives her similar ratings to former Chief Kathleen O'Toole, although Best is slightly less known (O'Toole in 2016 had a rating of 66% approve / 12% disapprove / 22% don't know).



**Personal Interactions with the Police**

More than four in ten Seattleites (44%) have had an interaction with the police in the last year, between being stopped in one's car or on the street, being in an accident or receiving a traffic violation, being questioned at home, and being arrested.

African Americans (63%) and Latinos (65%) are more than twice as likely to have interacted with the police as white residents (36%) in the last year. White and Asian American residents interacted with police at the same rate that they did in 2016, while the number of African American and Latino interactions have jumped – in 2016, 49% of African Americans and 46% of Latinos said they had interacted with police that year.

When it comes to reporting a crime to the police, the four largest racial/ethnic groups call 9-1-1 at a similar rate: 28% of Asian Americans and Latinos, 30% of whites, and 32% of African Americans have called 9-11 in the past year. However, when it comes to any other interaction with the police, race is a huge factor.

African Americans (26%) and Latinos (30%) were more than twice as likely to report having been stopped by the Seattle Police in a car this year than white residents (12%). They were also more than twice as likely to be stopped while on the street either inside or outside their neighborhood. Eleven percent of African Americans and 9% of Latinos report being questioned by Seattle Police at their home, compared to just 3% of whites. And while only 1% of whites and less than 1% of Asian Americans were arrested last year, 6% of African Americans and 8% of Latinos say they were.

When it comes to these interactions, residents overall mostly report a positive exchange with the police: 75% of residents approve of the way SPD handled their most significant interaction with police in the last year, an all-time high in our research and up from 65% in 2013. There is still a gap between African Americans (64%) and whites (72%), but that has narrowed since 2013 (46% African American / 77% white). A robust 47% of people strongly approve of how police treated them in a stop, up from a 39% average over the last three polls. Strong disapproval of stops is tied with its 2016 low of 12%, down from 21% in 2013.

On every specific measure we asked about, African Americans were still less likely than whites to report a positive interaction with the police. The biggest discrepancies were on agreeing the police had a valid reason for stopping them (69% of whites / 47% of African Americans), agreeing the amount of time they were stopped was reasonable (76% of whites / 56% of African Americans), and agreeing that the police officer kept them informed of what was going to happen next (67% of whites / 52% of African Americans). African Americans were also more likely to report the interaction turning serious, with 14% saying the police used physical force other than handcuffing (compared to 4% of whites), 13% saying the police threatened to use physical force (3% of whites), and 23% saying the police used verbally abusive language (12% of whites). These disparities are similar with what we found in previous years.



	2019		2016		2015		2013	
	AA	Whites	AA	Whites	AA	Whites	AA	Whites
You believe the police had a valid reason for stopping you	47	69	45	70	43	64	49	70
Police officer kept me informed of what was going to happen next	52	67	65	77	49	66	N/A	N/A
Police threatened to use physical force against you	13	3	13	5	22	12	24	3
Police used verbally abusive language	23	12	14	7	20	7	29	12

While Latinos were also less likely than white residents to agree that their interaction with police had specific positives (i.e. being treated respectfully, having all your questions answered, not having physical force used, etc.) their overall ratings are consistent with whites (72% approved of the interaction). Approval for personal interactions with SPD has trended steadily upward for Latinos since 2013, when just 42% approved of their interaction. Asian Americans have the most positive interactions of any racial group, with 94% approving of their interaction with police.

### **Discrimination Ratings**

A plurality of Seattleites (47%) disagree with the notion that SPD treats “all races and ethnicities equally,” with over a fifth (22%) *strongly* disagreeing. A majority of African Americans disagree with the statement (54% disagree), with African American women particularly in disagreement (61% disagree).

We have seen an erosion on this issue since 2016, when residents were evenly split on whether SPD treats all races and ethnicities evenly (43% agree / 43% disagree). White residents in particular have become more pessimistic on this front, with 43% disagreeing in 2016 and 49% disagreeing now. It appears 2016 was a high point for views on racial equity however, as the 2019 numbers are in line with where they were in 2013 and 2015 among voters overall and white voters.

% Disagree SPD treats races equally	Overall	White
2019	47	49
2016	43	43
2015	48	49
2013	48	50

In a similar vein, the percent of Seattleites who believe SPD “often” engages in racial profiling (57%) and “often” treats people differently because of their race (57%) have also risen 5-7 points since 2016. Belief that Seattle Police often engage in this behavior has risen among whites, Latinos and Asian Americans since 2016, although only Asian American views have worsened significantly since 2013 (2016 once again being a high point for views of SPD behavior). While views among African Americans have not gotten worse on this front since 2016, they remain the most likely to believe SPD engages in racial profiling, with 69% saying Seattle PD does it often, and over a quarter (28%) saying it happens very often.

Views on whether SPD treats specific communities of color similarly to everyone else have also worsened for each community since 2016, with now under a quarter of residents believing that African Americans are treated similarly to everyone else. Views on African Americans being treated the same have worsened among every racial group since 2016.

<b>% Same</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Native Americans</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	<b>Asian and Pacific Islanders</b>
<b>2019</b>	24	29	33	57
<b>2016</b>	31	35	36	63
<b>2015</b>	31	35	35	62
<b>2013</b>	32	33	33	56

### **Frequency of Negative Actions**

Over 8 in 10 city residents (84%) believe Seattle Police often treat people respectfully, a feeling that is consistent across all four racial groups and a high in our six years of polling. This number has gone up broadly since 2013 across racial and ethnic lines.

However, large segments of the population, especially African Americans and Latinos, continue to believe that Seattle Police often engage in troubling behavior. More than 4 in 10 (42%) believe SPD uses excessive physical force “often,” in line with the 41% who believed so in 2016. African Americans (60% often) and Latinos (49%) are far more likely to think the SPD frequently engages in this behavior than whites (40%) or Asians (31%). It is important to note though, that since we first polled in 2013, views among African Americans and Latinos have improved significantly, with the percent of African Americans who believe SPD routinely uses excessive physical force falling from 70% to 60%, and from 62% to 49% for Latinos.

Just over a quarter of residents believe SPD uses verbally abusive language often (27%), with African Americans (42% often) and Latinos (39%) once again believing this occurs more frequently than whites (25%) and Asians (19%). Views on SPD using abusive language have worsened among these two communities since 2016, when 35% of African Americans and 30% of Latinos said this happened often. Once again however, the views are an improvement from 2013, where 50% of African Americans and 48% of Latinos said this happened often.

The percent of Seattleites who believe SPD uses racial slurs often has declined steadily since 2013, from 26% to 20%. Perception of this occurrence is still high among African Americans and Latinos (34% often), though much improved since 2013 (47% often).

### **Effects of Racial Disparities in Treatment**

When people believe SPD has treated them poorly, people's friends, family, and neighbors hear about it. For example, just 4% of Seattleites report being treated differently because of their race, while 21% report personally knowing someone else who was treated differently because of their race. And while less than one percent of residents report being victims of excessive force, 5% of residents say they know someone who was a victim of excessive force.

	All Adults	African-Americans	Latinos	Whites	Asian Americans
<b>Experienced racially different treatment (self)</b>	4%	8%	11%	3%	2%
<b>Experienced racially different treatment (someone you know)</b>	21%	37%	26%	17%	19%
<b>Experienced excessive force (self)</b>	0%	2%	5%	0%	0%
<b>Experienced excessive force (someone you know)</b>	5%	12%	8%	3%	3%

This chart illustrates how SPD can garner high overall ratings, as well as high personal ratings, while negative perceptions, especially on race and force, can continue to exist. Many more people have heard of someone they know experiencing racial discrimination or excessive force from SPD than have been personally involved, because bad stories echo in the community via word of mouth even in lesser known, non-viral cases. For example, while 8% of African Americans report being discriminated against and 2% report being victims of excessive force, over a third (37%) say they or someone they know has been a victim of police discrimination and more than 1 in 10 (12%) say they or someone they know has been a victim of excessive force.

That being said, there has been a general downward trend since 2013 in the rate that African Americans and Latinos report experiencing or hearing about racially different treatment or excessive force. The rate has plummeted for Latinos in particular – 41% reported experiencing or hearing about racially different treatment in 2013, and 28% experienced or heard about excessive force, those rates are now 29% and 10% respectively.



<i>% Total Yes</i>	<b>Experienced racially different treatment (self or others)</b>	<b>Experienced excessive force (self or others)</b>
<b>African Americans (2019)</b>	37	12
<b>African Americans (2016)</b>	43	15
<b>African Americans (2015)</b>	45	16
<b>African Americans (2013)</b>	39	20
<b>Latinos (2019)</b>	29	10
<b>Latinos (2016)</b>	24	12
<b>Latinos (2015)</b>	34	11
<b>Latinos (2013)</b>	41	28

Of note, Seattle PD gets worse overall approval ratings among people who mostly hear about them by word of mouth (63%) than those who get most of their information from local TV news (78%), The Seattle Times (75%) or radio (69%).

Finally, when we asked city residents how SPD handled their most significant interaction with their family, friends, and neighbors, they are more negative (63% approve / 32% disapprove) than they are with their own interaction (75% approve / 21% disapprove). This disparity is entirely driven by people of color: 72% of whites approve of their own interaction and 70% that of their friend, family, or neighbor. Among people of color, 77% approve of their own interaction while just 51% approve of that of their friend, family, or neighbor. Clearly, positive interactions aren't getting heard as much in communities of color, while negative ones are being told and retold by people who disapprove of the way the police treated them. That repetition via social media and word of mouth is taking a toll on overall perceptions of SPD and how they treat different groups of people.

### **Body Cameras**

As we have seen every year we ask this question, there is overwhelming support for police patrol officers to wear body cameras. There is almost universal approval (91% support / 4% oppose), and it's not possible to find a statistically significant population in the city who supports this by any less than 85%. This is similar to the 93% of people who think it's a good idea nationally, according to Pew Research's September 2016 poll.



## Monitoring Team Staff

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1 The Court hereby approves the Community Survey of February 2019 dated March 7, 2019.

2 DONE IN OPEN COURT this \_\_\_\_\_ day of March, 2019.

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6 THE HONORABLE JAMES L. ROBART  
7 United States District Judge  
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2019, I caused this document to be electronically filed with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to the following attorneys of record.

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DATED this 7<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2019.

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